

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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CORRECTED COPY (PARA 1 LINE 6 -- 1976 VICE 1977)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, LI
SUBJECT: RITUAL KILLINGS AND POLITICS IN MARYLAND COUNTY

1. THE GOL RADIO ANNOUNCED AUGUST 3 THE ARREST OF
FORMER MARYLAND COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT JAMES ANDERSON;
ALLEN YANCY, REPRESENTATIVE FROM MARYLAND COUNTY;
AND EIGHT OTHERS IN CONNECTION WITH 14 RITUAL
KILLINGS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN MARYLAND COUNTY SINCE
NOVEMBER 1976, PRESIDENT TOLBERT, ANGERED BY REPORTS
REACHING HIM OF THESE KILLINGS, HAD FIRED SUPERINTENDENT
ANDERSON JULY 13 BECAUSE OF ANDERSON'S FAILURE TO
INFORM HIM OF THESE "MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCES" AND ORDERED
AN IMMEDIATE POLICE-ARMY INVESTIGATION. IN AN
ADDRESS JULY 13 BEFORE 43 RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND COUNTY
SUPERINTENDENTS, THE PRESIDENT CONDEMNED THESE "DEMONIC
ACTS", ADDING THAT RITUALISTIC KILLINGS HAD "APPARENTLY
BECOME NOTORIOUS IN A CERTAIN POLITICAL SUB-DIVISION
OF THE COUNTRY WHERE PEOPLE ARE BEING KILLED AND
CERTAIN PARTS OF THEIR BODY TAKEN OFF IN ORDER THAT
THE PERPETRATORS MAY GAIN POSITIONS". TOLBERT THEN
PROCLAIMED A FIVE-DAY PERIOD OF PRAYER; SUPPLICATION,
INTERCESSION AND FASTING DURING WHICH THE PEOPLE SHOULD
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ASK GOD'S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS FOR THEIR "MANIFOLD
ACTS OF TRANSGRESSION". BISHOP BENNIE D. WARNER (WHO
WAS NAMED BY TOLBERT AUGUST 3 AS HIS CHOICE TO REPLACE
THE DECEASED VICE PRESIDENT WILLIAM E. GREENE,
MONROVIA 5334), REPLIED TO THE PRESIDENT ON BEHALF OF
THE RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP COMMENDING HIM FOR HIS CONCERN
FOR HIS PEOPLE AND MANKIND, ASSURING HIM THAT THE

CHURCH HAS BEEN SPEAKING OUT AGAINST KILLINGS, AND
NOTING THAT "NATIONAL SINS INCLUDING CORRUPTION ARE
MAINLY CARRIED OUT BY THOSE IN AUTHORITY".

2. REPRESENTATIVE ALLEN YANCY HAS LONG BEEN
TAINTED WITH ASSOCIATION WITH RITUAL KILLINGS. IN
1966 HE WAS CONVICTED BY A MARYLAND COUNTY JURY OF
THE 1965 "JUJU" MURDER OF GABRIEL DIGGS, AN UNCLE
OF THE EDITOR OF THE LIBERIAN STAR. YANCY WAS THEN
DEPUTY POLICE COMMISSIONER OF MARYLAND COUNTY.
AN APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT RESULTED IN A RULING
THAT THE TRIAL WAS BIASED, AND YANCY AND HIS ACCOM-
PLICE, ALFRED MOULTON, WAS RELEASED (A-246,
JUNE 16, 1966). IT WAS ASSUMED AT THE TIME THAT
YANCY'S POLITICALLY POWERFUL FAMILY AND FRIENDS
(INCLUDING SHAD TUBMAN, JR.) HAD BEEN THE MAIN FORCE
BEHIND HIS ACQUITTAL. IN 1969 YANCE WAS AGAIN ARRESTED
ON SUSPICION OF A RITUAL MURDER, THIS TIME OF CHIEF
TAYEE AT GADETARBO, MARYLAND COUNTY. YANCY WAS RELEASED
ON BAIL AND THE CASE NEVER REACHED TRIAL.

3. COMMENT: OVER THE YEARS EMBASSY REPORTING
OFFICERS HAVE FOUND MARYLAND COUNTY TO BE PERHAPS THE
MOST SUPERSTITION-LADEN COUNTY IN LIBERIA. THEY HAVE
REPORTED THAT, ACCORDING TO LOCAL BELIEF, YANCY HAS
FELT THE NEED TO COMMIT RITUAL MURDERS IN ORDER TO
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RETAIN HIS "POWER", AND THAT MANY MARYLANDERS FEARED
AND DESPISED YANCY. AT THE 1966 TRIAL POPULAR OPINION
WAS CLEARLY AGAINST YANCY AND THE MURDER CONVICTION
WAS MET BY CHEERS FROM THE COURTROOM SPECTATORS. ON
AUGUST 1, WHEN YANCY WAS TAKEN TO HARPER FROM MONROVIA
BY NATIONAL POLICE, HE WAS PARADED NEAR NAKED
THROUGH THE STREETS OF HARPER, ENCOUNTERING HOSTILE
DEMONSTRATIONS FROM THE PEOPLE. MARYLAND SENATOR
SHAD TUBMAN COMMENTED TO THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR
AUGUST 4 THAT YANCY HAD BARELY ESCAPED THE HANGMAN'S
NOOSE IN 1966 AND THAT, IF IN FACT YANCY IS INVOLVED
IN THIS KIND OF KILLING, HE OUGHT TO BE TRIED AND
EXECUTED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. TUBMAN SAID THAT HE WAS
MOST DISHEARTENED BY THE FACT THAT POLICE INVESTIGATIONS
HAVE NOW UNCOVERED THAT FORMER SUPERINTENDENT ANDERSON,
A CLOSE FRIEND AND SCHOOL-MATE, MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED
IN THE MURDERS (ANDERSON IS THE SON OF THE NATIONAL
CHAIRMAN OF THE TRUE WHIG PARTY).

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